



# *A Guide to Flower Pressing*

## **Flowers and Flower Pressing Through the Years**



### **Ancient Civilizations**

Throughout many ancient civilizations, flowers have been a predominant feature in artwork and in burial rituals. For example, there is evidence that Egyptian cultures from long ago often used petals for everything from scenting houses to personal perfume. Flowers also appeared in religious ritual, particularly for preparing the dead for the afterlife. National Geographic noted that archaeologists unearthed pressed laurels and garlands in the 3,000-year-old coffin of Tutankhamun's mother. These adornments were used as a sign of respect for the dead and for beauty to be carried with them for a life beyond earth.

### **1500s and Cultural Connections**

The art of pressing and arranging flowers to create a picture may date back to the 16th Century. In this artistic rendering system, a few well-selected leaves might become a mountain or tiny white petals may represent a snow fall. The artist uses pressed plants in whole or part until completing an image. When Japanese exchanges with Europe increased, the art became fashionable in both England and America.

### **1890s**

Pressed flowers appear in various news reports throughout history. In 1891 for example, the Rochester Academy of Science reported that Mr. Streeter exhibited pressed flowers from Alaska, including clematis and larkspur.

It is also during this time frame that period scrapbooks were filled with pressed flowers of many sorts, including pansies, violets, and geraniums.

### **Early 1900s**

As a popular hobby, Victorian ladies created pictures out of dried pressed flowers and often combined them with ribbons. Throughout the era, the art of pressing flowers became increasingly popular. Slipping petals or a whole flower into a book became a way of preserving a special gift or moment and this was a common practice.

It was during this era that the son of a German missionary, Frederick Vester, assembled a lovely volume called "Flowers of the Holy Land." This edition features pressed flowers from Jerusalem inside a beautiful wooden cover.

### **1990s**

An extremely talented pressed flower artist by the name of Nobuo Sugino began making

international trips to collect pressed flower pieces. These works eventually became part of the "International Pressed Flower Art Book" in 1997. Mr. Sugino also became the President of the International Pressed Flower Art Society, which provides education and encouragement for pressed flower creations around the world.

[International Pressed Flower Art Society](#)



Natalia Kishigami's created the artwork entitled, *Three Gliders* from the following plants:

- *Pennisetum setaceum*, fountain grass, makes up the animal bodies' fur;
- *Lagurus ovatus*, known as bunnytail, is used to show the lighter patches on gliders' heads, bellies and chests;
- Bottlebrush, rose bark, moss, and eucalyptus leaves are used in the other parts of the picture.

**Source:** [The History of Pressed Flowers](#), By: Patricia Telesco Garden Guides, 21 September 2017

## The Art of Flower Pressing



Learn to identify native flowers and plants along with preserving their beauty for observation journals or different craft activities.

There are a few different methods when it comes to flower pressing:

Making a wooden press, using heavy books, an iron, or the microwave! All of these can be done from the home. You can also buy a flower press online.

### Choose Your Flowers

For optimal results, cut your flowers after the morning dew has evaporated and avoid cutting flowers on rainy days. It is best to have them be as dry as possible. You can press thicker flowers like peonies and orchids, but the easiest flowers will be the ones with flat blooms like violets and daisies.

Be sure to cut the stems of the flowers on an angle, then hydrate your flowers for a few hours in a vase with water and a teaspoon of sugar before pressing.

### Choose a Method

#### 1. Making a wooden press

- Take two pieces of plywood in your desired size. A suggested size is a square or a 9" x 12" rectangle.
- Drill holes in all four corners of both pieces of wood.
- Place your flowers flat on several layers of paper that are the same size as the press; these will be your blotter sheets. Then place another layer of papers on top of the flowers so that you now have a flower sandwich.
- Place this sandwich on top of one of the pieces of wood, and then place the second piece of wood on top of everything (layer sequence should be wood, paper, flowers, paper, wood).
- Use wing nuts and bolts to tighten everything together.
- Change the blotter sheets about every four days to prevent browning.
- Flowers will be finished pressing after 3-4 weeks.



## 2. Using books

- Gather the heaviest books you have!
- Place flowers face down between two pieces of paper.
- If the book is large, multiple sections of the book can be used to press flowers as long as there is a chunk of pages between each set.
- Once the flowers are placed inside, close the book and use other heavy objects like additional books or a brick to weigh down the closed book.
- Change the blotter sheets every several days.
- Wait 3-4 weeks for the flowers to be completely dry and use a pair of tweezers to remove the delicate flowers from the book.



## 3. Using an Iron

- Press flowers between two absorbent pieces of paper.
- Be sure that no water is in the iron.
- Heat the iron on a low setting. Once warm – press iron onto the top sheet of paper and hold it there for 10-15 seconds.
- Allow the paper to cool and repeat the process until the flowers are dried.



## 4. Using a Microwave

- You can either purchase or make your own microwave press – both work sufficiently.
  - Gather two ceramic tiles, line each tile with a piece of cardboard, and a piece of paper on top of the cardboard.
  - Place the flowers face down on the paper and sandwich everything together.
  - You can also place a book with flowers pressed inside in the microwave.
- \* Be sure there is no metal in the book. \***
- Similar to the ironing method, microwave the materials in 60 second intervals, allowing everything to cool down in between intervals.
  - When the flowers are dry, use the book pressing method for two days after you are finished microwaving.



## Creative Projects

There are endless ways to use your beautifully preserved pressed flowers. Here are a few different examples!

### Add to an Observation Journal

A great way to become familiar with different kinds of flowers and plants is to press them so they can be saved in a journal and referred to in the future. Flowers and plants can be pasted into the notebook and identified!



### Make a Coaster

You can use different materials like resin or wooden slices. Using clear casting epoxy, you can secure the flowers on the wooden slice.



**Make Jewelry** (photos courtesy of and project completed by Sara DiVito)

You can buy a floating locket or glass window pendant online, or make one like the one in the photo below



**Add into Homemade Paper** (photos courtesy of and project completed by Sara DiVito)

Making homemade paper is another fun project you can add you pressed flowers to. You can use the paper as place settings at the table, cards, gift tags, any whatever else you can come up with!

